

The Byzantine Family and the Monastery

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THE MONASTIC IDEAL

According to Luke 14:26, Jesus said: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and children and brothers and sisters . . . he cannot be my disciple." This saying, among others, had marked influence on the development of Christian monasticism, which was characterized by a rejection of the world in order to embrace the spiritual life. The word *monasticism* derives from the Greek verb *monazo*, "to live alone," which can be interpreted either as living as a solitary or as living "alone" in a cenobitic community, having left behind the world and one's family. The three principal obligations of the monk or nun, chastity, poverty, and obedience, can all be seen as linked to a cessation of family ties: celibacy entailed a renunciation of marriage and the production of offspring, poverty meant the abandonment of claims to the inheritance of family property or giving away such property, while obedience to an abess or abbot replaced obedience to parents or a spouse.¹

It is in this context that one should approach an analysis of the relationship between the Byzantine family and the monastery. The severance of all

worldly ties after adoption of the monastic habit was a cardinal principle of Byzantine monasticism, since attachment to one's family and to material possessions was viewed as a distraction for one embarked upon a life devoted to Christ.² Among the sacrifices expected of those who committed themselves to a regime of asceticism and prayer was a renunciation of all family ties, not only marriage, but also relationships with parents, siblings and children.³

Thus not only was a vow of celibacy a prerequisite of the monastic life, but the *typika* or rules drafted by the founders of monasteries also discouraged contacts with relatives, although to varying degrees. Some, like the rule for the fifteenth-century monastery of Charsianeites in Constantinople, were very strict, emphasizing the obligation to renounce all family ties: the new monk "should believe that his true father is the one who brings him to the True and First Father and that his brothers and friends and relatives are those who have chosen the same ascetic way of life as he has."⁴

Byzantine hagiography provides numerous examples of holy men and women who managed to attain this ideal of renunciation of their families. Nikon "ho Metanoeite," a tenth-century saint, abruptly abandoned his parents to take monastic vows at a distant monastery, "rejecting," as the hagiographer comments, "his dear and ancestral

This article focuses on the ways in which a monastic community functioned in a familial role and on the relationships of monks and nuns with their families. It will make only occasional reference to proprietary family monasteries established by laymen, since this topic has recently received exhaustive analysis by J. P. Thomas in *Private Religious Foundations in the Byzantine Empire* (Washington, D.C., 1987). I wish to thank Alexander Kazhdan, who commented on an earlier draft of the paper, and gave me access to some of his files on hagiography.

¹A recent survey of the development of Christian monasticism can be found in J. Gribomont and J. Leclercq, "Monasticism and Asceticism," in *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century*, ed. B. McGinn, J. Meyendorff, and J. Leclercq (New York, 1985), 89–131, with bibliography. See also D. Knowles, *Christian Monasticism* (New York-Toronto, 1969), 9–36, 229.

²Cf. Basil the Great, PG 31, cols. 1389C–1393C.

³J. Goar, *Euchologion sive Rituale Graecorum* (Venice, 1730; repr. Graz, 1960), 384.

⁴... ἀλλὰ πατέρα μὲν ἀληθινὸν ἡγεῖσθαι τὸν αὐτὸν προσάξοντα τῷ ἀληθινῷ καὶ πρώτῳ πατρὶ, ἀδελφοὺς δὲ καὶ φίλους καὶ συγγενεῖς τοὺς τὴν αὐτὴν αὐτῷ πολιτείαν προελομένους ἀσκητικὴν . . . ; I. M. Konidares and K. A. Manaphes, "Epitēleutios boulesis kai didaskalia tou oikoumenikou patriarchou Matthaiou A' (1397–1410)," *Ἑπ. Ἑτ. Βυζ. Στ.* 45 (1981–82), 489, 654–56 (hereafter *Charsianeites*).

land . . . and the very love of his parents.”⁵ When after a period of twelve years Nikon’s father tracked him down, the youth decided to flee the monastery before his father’s arrival, “reckoning it the greatest of evils to be captured by his father’s hands.”⁶ Nikon’s father pursued him, however, and the young monk was forced to swim across a raging torrent to escape. There ensued a poignant scene in which the father shouted across the river, proclaiming his love for his son; Nikon, touched with compassion, yielded a little, for he turned to face his father and bowed three times to acknowledge his presence before hurrying away.⁷ Thereafter the hagiographer makes no further mention of Nikon’s family.

Another example of a saint who renounced his family ties is Symeon the Theologian, who lived during the reign of Basil II. The first part of his lengthy *vita* devotes considerable attention to his family situation. Originally from Asia Minor, he was taken by his parents to Constantinople to live with a paternal uncle, be educated, and groomed for a career in imperial service. When he was still a teenager, however, his uncle suddenly died. Symeon decided to become a monk, but was urged by his spiritual mentor to postpone his vows for a while. When Symeon was about twenty he returned to his hometown on an official mission. His father urged him to delay his tonsure, tearfully begging his son not to abandon him in his old age.⁸ But Symeon refused to heed his father’s entreaties, since he “preferred the heavenly father to his father on earth” (τὸν οὐράνιον πατέρα ἀντὶ τοῦ ἐπιγείου προτιμησάμενος).⁹

The *vita* of the ninth-century saint Euthymios the Younger describes another monk who abandoned his family, in this case even a wife and daughter. The first part of the *vita* portrays the saint’s family at some length: he was born in Galatia to well-off parents, but lost his father at the age of seven. The boy became a tower of strength to his widowed mother, “her son . . . protector . . . father, defender,” who took responsibility for every-

thing.¹⁰ Since the mother wanted to perpetuate the family line, she married the youth to a woman called Euphrosyne, and they had a daughter named Anastaso. When Euthymios turned eighteen, however, he suddenly abandoned his womenfolk, his mother, two sisters, wife, and daughter, and went off to Mount Olympos to become a monk without leaving any word of his whereabouts.¹¹ For fifteen years he remained incommunicado, until one day he chanced to learn that his family was suffering agonies of uncertainty over his fate. He shed a little tear and sent a message to inform them that he was well and had become a monk, not because he hated his family, but obeying the call of His Lord. When Euthymios’ womenfolk learned his news, they all decided to become nuns, with the exception of his daughter Anastaso who was urged to marry and bear children “for the perpetuation of the family” (πρὸς διαμονὴν τοῦ γένους). And indeed she did produce three daughters and one son.¹²

The tale of Euthymios sums up neatly the ambivalence of Byzantines, torn between the desire to embrace monastic life and the desire to continue the family lineage. Other saints’ lives, *typika*, and monastic documents demonstrate that many Byzantine monks and nuns were unable to achieve the ideal of renunciation of the family. Not only was the Byzantine cenobitic monastery itself conceived of as a family, but many monasteries were established as family institutions, and many monks and nuns retained links with their relatives and with their ancestral property.¹³ Furthermore, the monastery fulfilled many of the functions of a nuclear or extended family.

THE IMAGERY OF THE MONASTERY AS FAMILY

The monastic communities in which monks and nuns took up residence represented a new spiritual kinship, meant to replace their biological family. The imagery of the family pervades monastic

⁵ . . . τό τε φιλόν καὶ πατρῶν ἔδαφος καὶ τὴν ἐνεγκαμένην καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ φάτρων τῶν γονέων ἀπόστοργα πάμπαν ποιοῦμενος . . . : D. F. Sullivan, *The Life of Saint Nikon* (Brookline, Mass., 1987), 38.4–6.

⁶ Μέγιστον γὰρ ἐν κακοῖς ἐτίθετο χερσὶ πατρικαῖς ληφθῆναι . . . : *ibid.*, p. 60.6–7.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 66–74.

⁸ “Un grand mystique byzantin: Vie de Syméon le Nouveau Théologien par Nicétas Stéthatos,” ed. I. Hausherr and G. Horn, *OCA* 12 (1928), 2–16 (hereafter *Vita Symeonis*).

⁹ *Vita Symeonis*, p. 16, chap. 8, lines 14–15.

¹⁰ . . . καὶ πάντα τῇ μητρὶ γίνεται, υἱός, ἀντὶλήπτωρ, φροντιστής, προστάτης, τῶν ἀνιώντων ἐπικουφιστής, τῶν εὐθύμων περιποιητής, ἀντιχηματίζει ταύτη κηδεμών, πατήρ, ὑπερασπιστής . . . : *Vita of Euthymios the Younger*, ed. L. Petit, *ROC* 8 (1903), 172.25–28 (hereafter *Vita Euthymii*).

¹¹ *Vita Euthymii*, 172–74.

¹² *Ibid.*, 180–82.

¹³ It was common for Byzantines to establish monasteries on their family estates, e.g., Theophanes the Confessor’s foundation on family property on the island of Kalonymos and Plato of Sakkoudion’s monastery near Mt. Olympos in Bithynia; cf. J. P. Thomas, *Private Religious Foundations in the Byzantine Empire* (Washington, D.C., 1987), 123 and note 56.

and hagiographic texts: the mother superior or father superior was in charge, responsible for the welfare of their children, the brethren or sisters. One monastic foundation charter admonished the mother superior to care for the nuns "as a true mother looks after her own daughters, and cares for them like her own limbs and organs."¹⁴ Particularly striking is the description of the spiritual father in the vita of Euthymios the Younger "who labored to give birth to his disciple through the Bible, who wrapped him in the swaddling clothes of prayers and admonitions, and nourished him with the milk of virtue and the life-giving bread of divine knowledge."¹⁵ Makarios Choumnos, fourteenth-century hegoumenos of the Nea Mone in Thessalonike, also applies this maternal imagery to himself when he describes his nurturing and training of young monks as a process of giving birth. He speaks, for example, of the monk Akakios, "with whom I was in travail with much labor and to whom I gave birth."¹⁶ Nuns benefited from the loving nurture of a spiritual father as well as mother, in the person of their spiritual confessor. When a nun took her monastic vows, she became the bride of Christ; thus Theodora Synadene, founder of the convent of Bebaia Elpis, wrote of her daughter Euphrosyne, pledged to convent life at a tender age: "I had vowed of old to marry this dearly beloved daughter of mine . . . and to betroth her to the purest and true and only Bridegroom Who is 'fairest of all the sons of men'."¹⁷ One function of the abbess was to betroth her spiritual daughters to Christ "alone as the One most pure Bridegroom, and to present chaste and holy brides and pure virgins to Him."¹⁸ Although it was formally forbidden, nuns frequently gave the con-

vent the equivalent of a dowry as an entrance gift.¹⁹ Even a monk might speak of "entering a bridal chamber" (πρὸς τινα νυμφικὴν παστάδα εἰσαχθεῖς) when he donned the monastic habit.²⁰

THE ASSUMPTION OF FAMILY FUNCTIONS BY THE MONASTERY

Not only was the monastic community viewed in terms of a family, but it also might fulfill some of the functions of the family by providing refuge for people in need who had no relatives or whose families could no longer care for them. Monasteries could offer a secure home for orphans, battered wives, the mentally ill, widows and widowers, the elderly. Very often it was some sort of family crisis or rite of passage that precipitated a person's decision to take the monastic habit: a child's loss of his parents, an unwanted betrothal, the death of a spouse, the advent of old age. Even the "empty nest syndrome" could precipitate the decision to enter a monastery; there are numerous examples of couples who decided to retire to separate monasteries after their children had grown.²¹ In the monastery could often be found a relationship compensating for one lost in the outside world: a "father" or "mother" for the orphaned child, Christ the Bridegroom for the reluctant fiancée, a spiritual son or daughter to tend to the needs of the elderly.

The monastic ideal was to leave behind ties to the past, to one's home, family, and friends, and to become part of a new kindred group, the monastic community or koinobion. To a certain extent this ideal was realized; nevertheless, the strength of the Byzantine family was such that not only were many monks and nuns unable to renounce their bonds of kinship, but a large number of Byzantine monasteries were inextricably linked with the families of their founders and benefactors.

FAMILY TIES WITHIN THE MONASTERY

Members of the same family often resided at the same monastery, despite the monastic ideal of renunciation of family ties. A frequent pattern was that a teenaged boy or girl would enter the mon-

¹⁴ . . . ὡς μήτηρ γνησίᾳ θυγατέρων ἐπιμελουμένη γνησίων καὶ ὅσα καὶ μελῶν ἰδίων καὶ σπλάγγων φροντίζουσα τούτων, . . . : typikon for convent of Bebaia Elpis, ed. H. Delehaye, *Deux typica byzantins de l'époque des Paléologues* (Brussels, 1921), chap. 35, p. 39.7–8 (hereafter *Bebaia Elpis*).

¹⁵ . . . τῷ διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ἡμᾶς ὠδινήσαντι, εὐχαῖς τε καὶ νοουθεσίαις ἱεραῖς σπαργανώσαντι, γάλακτι τε ἀρετῶν παιδοτροφήσαντι καὶ ἄρτῳ ζωτικῷ θεῖας ἐπιγνώσεως θρέψαντι . . . : *Vita Euthymii*, 169.10–13.

¹⁶ Ἀκάκιος, ὃν ὠδίνῃσα μετὰ πολλῶν πόνων καὶ ἔτεκον . . . : V. Laurent, "Ecrits spirituels inédits de Macaire Choumnos (d. c. 1382), fondateur de la 'Nea Moni' à Thessalonique," *Hellenika* 14 (1955), 63.107–8.

¹⁷ . . . ταύτην τὴν ἐμοὶ πεποθῆμένην κόρην τὴν ἐμὴν καὶ τοῦ γένους παντὸς καλλονὴν ὀλοψύχως πάλαι ἠϋξάμην καὶ νυμφεύσασθαι καὶ ἀρρυσάσθαι ὥραίῳ κάλλει παρὰ πάντας υἱοὺς ἀνθρώπων καὶ καθαρωτάτῳ ὄντι νυμφίῳ καὶ ἀληθινῷ τε καὶ μόνῳ . . . : *Bebaia Elpis*, chap. 9, p. 25.9–13.

¹⁸ . . . ἐνὶ μόνῳ τούτῳ ὡς καθαρωτάτῳ νυμφίῳ ἀρμόζειν καὶ νύμφας ἀγνάς τε καὶ ἱεράς καὶ ἀφθόρους παρθένους παριστάειν αὐτῷ . . . : *ibid.*, chap. 27, p. 34.18–20.

¹⁹ Typikon of convent of Lips, ed. H. Delehaye. *Deux typica byzantins*, chap. 14, p. 114. 3–16 (hereafter *Lips*).

²⁰ Typikon of Skoteine monastery, ed. S. Eustratiades, "He en Philadelphiea mone tes hyperagias Theotokou tes Koteines (sic)," *Hellenika* 3 (1930), 327.20–21 (hereafter *Skoteine*).

²¹ For further analysis of some of the motives that persuaded women to take monastic vows, see A.-M. Talbot, "Late Byzantine Nuns: By Choice or Necessity?," *BF* 9 (1985), 103–17.

astery where an uncle or aunt or other relative had already taken vows. Thus when Athanasios, the future patriarch of Constantinople, decided to enter monastic life, he left Adrianople and became a novice at his paternal uncle's monastery in Thessalonike.²²

Another common phenomenon was that a monastery would be founded by a group of relatives, such as two brothers or a father and son. The typikon of the monastery of Skoteine, near Philadelphia, written by the monk Maximos, states that it was founded by his father Gregory and his grandfather Niphon. As so often, it was a family crisis that triggered Gregory's retirement from the world. When his wife died, Gregory and his father decided to go off to the mountains. Gregory's infant son Maximos was left in the care of his grandmother until he was old enough to join his father and grandfather. Two of Gregory's brothers also took vows at the Skoteine monastery.²³

Sometimes virtually all the members of a family would decide to take monastic vows at the same time. A case in point is the family of Gregory Palamas. Gregory was the eldest child of Constantine and Kale Palamas. Constantine died ca. 1303, leaving behind his wife and five children under the age of eight. At first Kale wanted to abandon her family and enter a convent, but was persuaded to postpone this decision until her children were more fully grown.²⁴ It is noteworthy here that although the distraught widow was willing to renounce her family obligations, other family members prevailed upon her to give priority to raising her children. When Gregory reached the age of twenty, he decided to enter monastic life; he and his two brothers went to Mount Athos, while his mother and two sisters entered a convent in Constantinople.²⁵ After his mother's death, Gregory moved

his sisters to a convent in Berrhoia²⁶ because he was now living as a solitary on a nearby mountain, and presumably wanted to keep an eye on them.

Even on Athos, where one might expect renunciation of worldly and family ties to be most extreme, one finds examples of brothers, or a father and son, or other combinations of relatives, entering the same monastery or founding a new monastery. Hilandar was restored by the famous Serbian father and son, Stefan Nemanja and his son Sava; Xenophon was established by Xenophon and his cousin Theodoulos; Iveron by John the Iberian and his son Euthymios; Pantokrator by the brothers Alexios and John.

In a few cases, as at the fourteenth-century convent of the Theotokos tes Bebaías Elpidos (Virgin of Good Hope) in Constantinople, we can trace members of at least three generations taking vows at the same convent.²⁷ Another nunnery, Kyra Martha, was a favorite with the women of the Palaiologos and Kantakouzenos families.²⁸ Some imperial princesses, married to foreign rulers or independent Greek *despotai* for reasons of diplomacy, returned to Constantinople after they were widowed and took the veil.²⁹ For them a family monastery represented a refuge, a connection with the family from which they had been separated for many years.

Although double monasteries, that is, adjacent male and female monasteries under the rule of a single superior, were officially forbidden and seem to have been relatively rare in Byzantium,³⁰ there are some indications that they provided opportunities for male and female members of the same family to remain in proximity to each other even

²² Vita of Athanasios by Theoktistos the Stoudite, ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, "Žitija dvuh' Vselenskih' patriarhov XIV v., svv. Afanasija I i Isidora I," in *Zapiski istoriko-filologičeskago fakul'teta Imperatorskago S.-Peterburgskago Universiteta*, 76 (1905), 4.21. Many other examples could be cited: Elisabeth the Thaumaturge became a nun at a convent headed by her paternal aunt (F. Halkin, "Sainte Elisabeth d'Héraclée, abbesse à Constantinople," *AB* 91 [1973], 257); when Theodora of Thessalonike dedicated her young daughter to monastic life, she entrusted her to the care of a female relative at the monastery of St. Luke; cf. E. Kurtz, *Des Klerikers Gregorios Bericht über Leben, Wunderthaten und Translation der hl. Theodora von Thessalonich nebst der Metaphrase des Johannes Staurakios* (St. Petersburg, 1902), 5.17–22 (hereafter *Vita Theodoraē*, ed. Kurtz).

²³ Skoteine, 325 f.

²⁴ Philotheos Kokkinos, *Enkomion of Palamas*, PG 151, col. 558C–D.

²⁵ PG 151, col. 562A–B.

²⁶ PG 151, col. 572C–D.

²⁷ Cf. below, note 56.

²⁸ Among the women who retired to this convent were Irene Kantakouzene, the wife of John VI (Kantakouzenos, *Hist.*, Bonn ed., 3: 307.7–13), and her daughter, Maria Kantakouzene, the widow of Nikephoros II, despot of Epiros (Kantakouzenos, *Hist.* 3: 319.18–20). John VI's mother, Theodora, was buried there in the family mausoleum (*Hist.* 2: 222.19–223.3).

²⁹ Examples are (1) Maria Kantakouzene (see above, note 28); (2) Simonis, the daughter of Andronikos II, who became the child-bride of Stefan Uroš II Milutin of Serbia; after being widowed she returned to the convent of St. Andrew in Krisei which had been restored by a cousin, Theodora Raoulaina (F. Dölger, *BZ* 27 [1927], 132, review of M. Laskaris, *Vizantiske princeze u srednjevekovnoj Srbiji* [Belgrade, 1926]); (3) Theodora, daughter of Michael IX, who was married to Michael III Šišman of Bulgaria and, after being widowed, returned to Constantinople, most probably to the convent of Kyra Martha, as the nun Theodosia (Kantakouzenos, *Hist.* 2:222.14–223.3).

³⁰ J. Pargoire, "Les monastères doubles chez les Byzantins," *EO* 9 (1906), 21–25. A. M. Talbot, "A Comparison of the Monastic Experience of Byzantine Men and Women," *GOTR* 30 (1985), 5–7.

after taking the monastic habit. For example, Euthymios the Younger founded a double monastery directed by his grandson and granddaughter.³¹ In the fourteenth century, when Nikephoros Choumnos and his wife, the parents of Irene-Eulogia Choumnaina, decided to take monastic vows, they entered the double monastery of Christ Philanthropos over which their daughter presided as abbess.³² An unusual case of family solidarity is that of the fourteenth-century family of St. Philotheos of Athos. Philotheos and his brother were the children of refugees who had fled to Macedonia from the Turkish occupation of Asia Minor. After their father died, both boys were recruited for the Ottoman child-levy or *devshirme*. Eventually the boys escaped their captors and made their way to a double monastery at Neapolis (modern Kavalla). Their mother, ignorant of her children's fate, decided to become a nun in the female part of this monastery, and to her amazement was reunited there with her two sons.³³

There are even a few legendary accounts in hagiography (all before the ninth century) of girls who disguised themselves as monks in order to enter the same monasteries as their fathers; an example is Marina (fifth century?) who refused to be parted from her father when he decided to take monastic vows and joined him as the monk Marinos.³⁴

One of the most vivid depictions of the ambivalent position in which relatives living in the same monastery could find themselves is in the Life of St. Theodora of Thessalonike. Theodora was born on the island of Aegina ca. 812. Her mother died in childbirth, and her bereft father took the monastic habit before his wife was even buried, entrusting his infant daughter to the care of a female relative. As in the case of Maximos of the Skoteine monastery, cited above, we see how the decision to take monastic vows was precipitated by the death of a spouse, how a father seemingly abandoned his child in favor of monastic life. Theodora married and moved to Thessalonike with her husband to escape Arab raids on Aegina. The couple had three children of whom only one lived; in grati-

tude for her survival the parents dedicated her to God and placed her in a convent. The young girl took the monastic name Theopiste. Shortly afterward Theodora's husband died and the twenty-five-year-old widow joined her daughter in monastic life.³⁵ Now that she saw her daughter on a daily basis, Theodora found herself torn between her love for Theopiste and her vows to renounce such emotional ties. Theodora was unable to relinquish her maternal solicitude for her daughter, and was overly concerned for her welfare. The abbess punished them by ordering them to live together in a little house, but not to speak to each other. Thus they spent fifteen years in silence, weaving and grinding grain until the abbess finally relented. Thereafter mother and daughter treated each other just as they would any other member of the community, that is, as spiritual sisters.³⁶

TIES OF MONKS AND NUNS TO THEIR FAMILIES IN THE OUTSIDE WORLD

Let us now turn from relations between family members living in the same monastery to the ties between monks or nuns and their relatives in the outside world.

One indication of the continuing ties of monks and nuns to their families is the provision made in some typika for reasonably extensive visitation with family members. The typikon of Charsianeites, cited above, was very strict and discouraged any contact with the outside world. Other monastic rules, especially those for convents, were more lenient, recognizing the frailty of human nature. The twelfth-century typikon of the nunnery of Theotokos Kecharitomene, founded by Irene Doukaina, wife of Emperor Alexios I Komnenos, permitted a nun's female relatives to visit her at the convent once or twice a year. Visitors might remain the entire day and dine in the refectory. If the nun were ill, her mother (and only her mother) would be granted permission to stay an extra day. Male relatives, on the other hand, were forbidden to enter the convent. The nun had to meet them at the gate; the rule held even if she were seriously ill, in which case she was to be carried on a stretcher to the monastery entrance. A nun could leave the cloister to visit her parents only if they were gravely ill.³⁷

³¹ *Vita Euthymii*, 202.13–21.

³² J. Verpeaux, *Nicéphore Choumnos, homme d'état et humaniste byzantin*, ca. 1250/1255–1327 (Paris, 1959), 62.

³³ B. Papoulia, "Die Vita des hl. Philotheos vom Athos," *SO-Forsch* 22 (1963), 273–76.

³⁴ L. Clugnet, "Vie de sainte Marine," *ROC* 6 (1901), 575 f. Recent discussion of the phenomenon of women disguised as monks is found in E. Patlagean, "L'histoire de la femme déguisée en moine et l'évolution de la sainteté féminine à Byzance," *SM*, ser. 3, 17 (1976), 597–623.

³⁵ *Vita Theodora*, ed. Kurtz, 12.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.30–17.37.

³⁷ Typikon for convent of Kecharitomene, chap. 17, ed. P. Gautier, "Le typikon de le Théotokos Kécharitôménè," *REB* 43 (1985), 61 (hereafter *Kecharitomene*).

Two typika for Palaiologan convents, Bebaia Elpis and Lips, relaxed monastic discipline even further and permitted nuns to leave the monastery to visit their relatives on a regular basis: in some cases alone, in other cases accompanied by elderly nuns.³⁸ The abbess Irene-Eulogia Choumnaina, who was frequently chided by her spiritual director for her lingering attachment to her family, was visited by her father, Nikephoros Choumnos, every weekend.³⁹

THE ROLE OF THE MONASTERY AS FAMILY MAUSOLEUM AND IN THE COMMEMORATION OF DECEASED FAMILY MEMBERS

The ties between monasteries and families can also be seen in provisions made for burial and for commemoration after death. Typika pay particular attention to instructions for the proper celebration of commemorative services for the deceased on the anniversary of their death, for the illumination of the church, the distribution of *kollyba*, and offering of alms to the poor. Many imperial and aristocratic monasteries included funerary chapels or church narthexes serving as family mausolea. From the tenth century there is the Myrelaion church, burial place of the Lekapenoi; in the twelfth century members of the Komnenos family were interred in the church of St. Michael at the Pantokrator monastery, as well as at the Kecharitomene convent. Irene Doukaina stipulates that the nuns of the latter convent are to be buried elsewhere, because of the lack of space, but provides that her daughters, daughters-in-law, and granddaughters may be buried in the exonarthex of the convent church if they have taken monastic vows.⁴⁰

The practice of burial of imperial and aristocratic family members in monastic churches seems particularly common in the early Palaiologan period. At the convent of Lips, for example, in the late thirteenth century the Dowager Empress Theodora Palaiologina, widow of Michael VIII, added a church dedicated to the Prodomos (the so-called south church) to the already existing tenth-century church of the Theotokos to serve as a mausoleum for herself and members of the Palaiologos family. It has been suggested that she took this step because the imperial mausolea at the

nearby church of the Holy Apostles had been destroyed during the Latin occupation.⁴¹ She gave instructions for tombs to be prepared for a daughter who had predeceased her, for herself, and for her mother, noting that she could not bear to be separated from her mother even in death. A space was also to be left for the tomb of her son, Andronikos II, if he chose to be buried there.⁴² Theodora makes no mention of a tomb for her husband, for the good reason that he had been excommunicated by the Church for his support of the Union of Lyons in 1274 and was refused proper burial after his death. At the Chora church, the parekklesion was added in the early fourteenth century as a mortuary chapel with arcosolia to hold tombs. Other tombs were added later in the narthexes. Above each sarcophagus was a fresco portrait of the deceased, usually accompanied by portraits of one or more members of his or her family. Sometimes the deceased is depicted twice, as a layperson and in the monastic habit.⁴³ The contemporaneous parekklesion of the Pammakaristos monastery, erected in memory of Michael Glabas Tarchaneiotēs (d. 1304) by his widow Maria, also housed the tombs of other members of the Glabas and Tarchaneiotēs families.⁴⁴

THE CONVENT OF BEBAIA ELPIS: A PARADIGM OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MONASTERY AND FAMILY

The fourteenth-century typikon for the convent of the Virgin of Sure Hope (Theotokos tes Bebaias Elpidos), drafted by its *ktetor* Theodora Synadene, merits detailed analysis as a document which clearly reveals the close relationship between a monastery and the family of its aristocratic founders, and exemplifies many of the characteristics outlined above. This lengthy monastic rule, preserved at Oxford and often called the Lincoln College Typikon, exudes a pride in the founder's own lineage and that of her late husband, the *stratopedarches* John Synadenos. The twelve full-page miniatures with portraits of family members placed at the beginning of the deluxe manuscript provide immediate visual evidence for the strong connec-

³⁸ *Bebaia Elpis*, chap. 77, pp. 63–64; *Lips*, chap. 15, pp. 114–15.

³⁹ Nikephoros Choumnos, letter 163, ed. J. F. Boissonade, *Anecdota Nova* (Paris, 1844; repr. Hildesheim, 1962), 181 f.

⁴⁰ *Kecharitomene*, chaps. 70, 76, pp. 115, 131.

⁴¹ T. Macridy, "The Monastery of Lips (Fenari Isa Camii) at Istanbul," *DOP* 18 (1964), 258.

⁴² *Lips*, chap. 42, p. 130.

⁴³ P. A. Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, I (New York, 1966), 269–99.

⁴⁴ H. Belting, C. Mango, and D. Mouriki, *The Mosaics and Frescoes of St. Mary Pammakaristos (Fethiye Camii at Istanbul)* (Washington, D. C., 1978), 6–9, 15–18, 21.

tions between the monastery and Theodora's family,⁴⁵ evidence fully borne out by the text that follows.

Theodora states at the beginning of the *typikon* that after the death of her husband she founded the convent as a refuge for herself and her daughter Euphrosyne, whom she planned to betroth to Christ the Bridegroom. Theodora uses the imagery of childbirth to describe her construction of the church and other convent buildings: "I conceived in the womb of my heart and gave birth to this truly good and holy and divine love and desire."⁴⁶ She comments that she undertook the establishment of a monastery in gratitude for her many blessings, among which she singles out for special mention her "admirable parents distinguished for their noble lineage";⁴⁷ her father was a Palaiologos (brother of Michael VIII), while her mother traced "her golden lineage to that extremely famous and celebrated Branas family."⁴⁸ She then married a man who traced his lineage clearly to the families of the Komnenoi and Synadenoi.

Although in her rule Theodora warns the nuns against emotional involvement with their relatives, reminding them of their vows to reject worldly ties, she relaxes the customary discipline and grants the nuns greater freedom to see their relatives than was usual. Thus relatives could come to the convent for supervised visits with the nuns, and the nuns in turn could leave the convent to visit their relatives at home provided they were accompanied by two nuns.⁴⁹ As we have seen, earlier *typika* were stricter and permitted home visits only if a relative were terminally ill.

Theodora placed great emphasis on the proper commemoration of the anniversaries of the deaths of her relatives, to such an extent that she failed to make any mention of memorial services for the nuns of the convent; this omission was rectified by her daughter in an appendix to the *typikon*.⁵⁰ Theodora gave detailed instructions for the celebration of commemorative services for her parents

and husband, specifying twelve priests, six candle-stands, the preparation of *kollyba*, and the distribution of bread and wine to beggars at the monastery gates. She mentions that both her parents and husband took the habit before their deaths and gives their monastic names, but at the same time proudly rolls off their full family names: her father Constantine Komnenos Palaiologos Doukas Angelos, her mother Maria Branaina Komnene Laskarina Kantakouzene Palaiologina, and her husband John Angelos Doukas Synadenos. Theodora also made provision for the commemoration of herself, her daughter, and her two sons and their wives.⁵¹

It is no coincidence that immediately following the section on commemoration of the dead is an enumeration of the property donated by Theodora and her relatives to the convent.⁵² For in Byzantium one of the primary motivations for making donations to a monastery was to secure the prayers of the monks or nuns for one's salvation, in addition to providing for the physical needs of the monastic community. Theodora listed the properties which she herself donated to the convent: vineyards, arable land, entire villages, as well as properties donated by her son, her daughter-in-law, and a nephew. She noted, for example, that her daughter-in-law gave a vineyard "for her spiritual salvation" (ὕπερ ψυχικῆς αὐτῆς σωτηρίας).⁵³ Nevertheless, Theodora retained ownership of some of her ancestral properties in order to make provision for her own personal needs and the special requirements of her daughter who evidently suffered from frail health.⁵⁴

It seems that some years later, after a number of her close relatives had died, Theodora added an appendix including the anniversary dates and specific instructions for the memorial services of nine family members.⁵⁵ In this appendix the linkage between contributions to the monastery and commemoration of the anniversary of one's death is particularly noticeable. In each instance Theodora lists the full name: her daughter-in-law Thomais, for example, bears the name of no less than five imperial families, Kyra Thomais Komnene Doukaina Laskarina Kantakouzene Palaiologina. Some family members donated sacred vessels or icons in-

⁴⁵ A. Cutler and P. Magdalino, "Some Precisions on the Lincoln College Typikon," *CahArch* 27 (1978), 179–98.

⁴⁶ Τοῦτον οὖν τὸν ὄντως καλὸν καὶ σεμνὸν καὶ θεῖον ἔρωτά τε καὶ πόθον ἀμυδρῶς πως καὶ ἐν γαστρὶ καρδίας καὶ συλλαβοῦσα καὶ ὠδινῆσα . . . : *Bebaiia Elpis*, chap. 4, p. 22.6–8.

⁴⁷ . . . καὶ ἀπόβλεπτοι ἐγένοντο οἱ γονεῖς λαμπρότητι γένους . . . : *ibid.*, chap. 5, p. 23.1–2.

⁴⁸ Ἡ μήτηρ δὲ εὐγενεστάτη μὲν ἦν καὶ αὐτὴ καὶ περιφανεστάτη ἐν πάσαις, ἐκ τῶν Βρανῶν, τῶν ἁγαν ἐνδόξων καὶ διαβοήτων ἐκείνων, ἔλκουσα τὴν τοῦ γένους χρυσέαν σειράν . . . : *ibid.*, chap. 6, p. 23.22–24.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, chaps. 75–76, pp. 61–63.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, chap. 149, pp. 98–99.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, chaps. 113–19, pp. 80–82.

⁵² *Ibid.*, chaps. 121–24, pp. 83–85.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, chap. 122, p. 84.17–20.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, chap. 124, p. 85.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, chaps. 134–43, pp. 91–94.

stead of land, or gave sizable amounts of money. Theodora's sister and brother-in-law gave an icon, and 1,000 hyperpera, plus 72 more hyperpera to purchase a winepress. There seems to be some correlation between the size of the contribution and the number of liturgies celebrated on the anniversary of one's death; thus a gift of 500 hyperpera and a silver lamp merited six liturgies, while 100 hyperpera and a gold oil vessel earned one four liturgies. In the case of her granddaughter, who was evidently too young to have become a benefactor of the convent before her death, Theodora noted that "even though she made no donation to the convent, still her father, my beloved son . . . has already made abundant contributions, and will make further donations in the future . . . Therefore her memorial services should not be overlooked."⁵⁶ In all, Theodora specified commemorations for fifteen relatives; it should be noted that every single family member commemorated took monastic vows before death. In the case of most of her female relatives, she does not specifically state where they took their vows, but we do know that at least one daughter and granddaughter⁵⁷ followed the lead of Theodora and entered the convent of Bebaia Elpis, and it is possible that they all did.

CASES OF CONFLICT BETWEEN THE MONASTERY AND THE FAMILY

As we have seen, monasteries could offer a semblance of life in a familial community, might perform some family functions, and occasionally provided a refuge in times of family crisis. Yet when viewed from a modern perspective, the monastic ideal of renunciation of the world can be seen as a disruptive influence on the family unit. Hagiography tells us of barren couples who finally miraculously conceived, only to dedicate the infant to God and give up their child to monastic life. We read of children and adolescents who ran away from home to enter monasteries, of young men and women who refused to go through with the marriages arranged by their parents, preferring a

life of celibacy. There are cases of husbands leaving their wives, of young widows and widowers who abandoned their orphaned children to take monastic vows, of middle-aged couples who, once their children were grown, separated to enter different monasteries. Individuals who took the monastic habit frequently donated all or much of their property to the monastery, thus depriving their relatives of an anticipated inheritance.

In hagiographic accounts these actions are normally viewed as virtuous and praiseworthy deeds; the value of the life dedicated to God is so great that it outweighs any obligations to one's family. Only rarely are there some indications of resistance or protest against these societal norms, or expressions of emotion inconsistent with the ideal of behavior prevalent at the time. Some parents, for example, were not overjoyed at the prospect of losing their child to the monastic life. Sometimes they argued that the child was too young to embark upon the ascetic life-style; others worried about who was going to look after them in their old age. The father of Symeon the Theologian, as we have seen, was extremely distressed about Symeon's plan to take monastic vows, calling him "the staff of his old age and the consolation of his soul" (σε μόνον βακτηρίαν τοῦ γήρους μου καὶ τῆς ἐμῆς ψυχῆς παραμύθιον κέκτημαι). If Symeon insisted on becoming a monk, let him at least wait until his father died, he urged.⁵⁸ Even after Symeon had entered the Stoudios monastery, his family tried to persuade him to leave.⁵⁹ In his case, not only did the father want the son as a support in his declining years, but the family hoped that he would have a successful secular career in Constantinople. The fifteenth-century patriarch Matthew I reveals in his testament that when he wanted to take monastic vows at age twelve, his parents objected so strongly that he had to wait until he was fifteen to leave home.⁶⁰

The mother and father of Maximos Kausokalybites were also reportedly reluctant to see their son become a monk. A version of his vita reports that they were planning his marriage when he left home.⁶¹ Clearly one reason for parental unhappiness at a child's decision to enter monastic life was their concern for the perpetuation of the family line. In the family of the saints from Mytilene, Da-

⁵⁶ . . . εἰ γὰρ καὶ οὐδὲν αὐτῇ τῇ μονῇ προσήνεγκεν, ἀλλ' οὖν ὁ περιπόθητός μου υἱὸς πρωτοστράτωρ ὁ πατὴρ αὐτῆς καὶ πρῶτα μὲν πλείστα προσενήνοχε καὶ καθ' ἑκάστην καὶ ἔτι προσαναθήσει εἰς τὸ ἐξῆς ζῶν καὶ εὐμερῶν χάριτι τοῦ Χριστοῦ πλείονα. Διὰ τοῦτο μὴδὲ ταύτης τὰ μνημόσυνα ἀμελείσθωσαν . . . : *ibid.*, chap. 136, p. 91.28–32.

⁵⁷ Her daughter Euphrosyne Palaiologina, and her granddaughter Irene-Eugenia Kantakouzene Philanthropene, daughter of John Synadenos and Thomais-Xene Kantakouzene (chap. 158, p. 104.6–10, chap. 159, pp. 104.33–105.4).

⁵⁸ *Vita Symeonis*, 14–16.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, chap. 17, p. 26.

⁶⁰ *Charsianites*, 472.34–474.89.

⁶¹ F. Halkin, "Deux vies de S. Maxime le Kausokalybe, ermite au Mont Athos (XIV^e S.)," *AB* 54 (1936), 68.32–69.4.

vid, Symeon, and George, of eight children six took monastic vows, while two remained in the world "to preserve the family" (εἰς γένους διαδοχήν).⁶²

Some sources describe a father's abandonment of an infant child in order to take monastic vows in a matter-of-fact manner, as a normal course of action.⁶³ We have seen, however, that the family of Kale Palamas dissuaded her from taking the veil until her five children were grown.⁶⁴ Likewise, in the thirteenth century Patriarch Germanos II (1223–40) wrote a letter to the widow of a certain Michael Xeros discouraging her from taking monastic vows because she had several young children.⁶⁵ Again there are numerous cases of a young man or woman fleeing a projected marriage to embrace a life of celibacy.⁶⁶ In the vita of Irene of Chrysobalanton, however, a young nun from Capadocia is vividly depicted as consumed with passionate longing for the fiancé she had rejected.⁶⁷ In hagiographic terms she was possessed by a demon; we would interpret her condition as one of sorrow for her lost love, and of regret for renouncing the possibility of marriage.

It seems that normally a family supported the decision of one of its members to give property to a monastery.⁶⁸ Occasionally, however, such donations were seen as a threat to the family fortunes, and attempts were made to curtail gifts of property to monastic institutions. A well-known example is that of Irene Choumnaina, the daughter of Nikephoros Choumnos, who decided to enter a monastery after she was widowed at age sixteen. We are told that she gave away part of her wealth for poor relief and ransoming prisoners of war, and used the rest for the restoration of the double monastery of Christ Philanthropos.⁶⁹ In fact she did not give away all her property, and from her correspondence with her spiritual father Theoleptos of

Philadelphia we learn that she continued to have problems with her family over the disposition of her remaining property. Her father criticized Theoleptos for encouraging his daughter to give away her fortune.⁷⁰

A fifteenth-century lawsuit describes the case of a disappointed heir named Demetrios Boulotes. He was originally supposed to inherit the property of a cousin by marriage, Irene Apokaukissa. When she was near death, however, she decided to enter the convent of St. Kyprianos in Constantinople, so as to assure her care during her final illness and her proper burial. As a result she changed her will to leave all her property to the nunnery. At first Demetrios agreed to this arrangement, saying he was unable to look after the dying woman. After her death, however, Demetrios sued the nunnery in an attempt to retrieve his inheritance. The synod ruled in favor of the nuns. This is an instance of the transfer of the role of the family to a monastery; when the family was unable to care for the ailing Irene, she found the nursing she required at a convent, and made over her property to the nuns who tended to her needs.⁷¹

CONCLUSION

In the sources which have been analyzed, dating from the ninth to the fifteenth centuries, we have seen a wide range in the rules of various monasteries with regard to maintenance of kinship ties and in the attitudes of individual monks and nuns. They can vary from a rigid denial of all links to one's biological family to daily contact with relatives. In concluding, I should like to examine the question of whether any patterns can be discerned in relationships between monasteries and families. There are some indications of a change over time toward stronger connections between families and monastic institutions. One could point, for example, to the predilection of Palaiologan aristocratic and imperial families for monasteries as family burial sites, to the revival of double monasteries in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries,

⁶² "Acta graeca Ss. Davidis, Symeonis et Georgii Mitylenae in insula Lesbo," ed. I. van den Gheyn, *AB* 18 (1899), 212.29–31.

⁶³ *Vita Theodoraе*, ed. Kurtz, 2.31–3.5; *Skoteine*, 326.1–8.

⁶⁴ Philotheos Kokkinos, *Enkomion of Palamas*, PG 151, col. 558C–D.

⁶⁵ A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Analekta hierosolymitikes stachyologias*, I (St. Petersburg, 1899; repr. Brussels, 1963), 465 f.

⁶⁶ E.g., Maximos Kausokalybites (cf. above, note 60) and Alexios "homo dei" (cf. F. M. Esteves Pereira, "Légende grecque de l'homme de Dieu saint Alexis," *AB* 19 [1900], 244 f.).

⁶⁷ *The Life of St. Irene of Chrysobalanton*, ed. J. O. Rosenqvist (Uppsala, 1986), chap. 13.

⁶⁸ E.g., in 1304 the widow Maria Angelina made a donation of land to Lavra with the express consent of her father; cf. *Actes de Lavra*, ed. P. Lemerle et al., II (Paris, 1977), no. 98.7.

⁶⁹ Gregoras, *Hist.* 3:238.18–21.

⁷⁰ Cf. A. C. Hero, "The Unpublished Letters of Theoleptos Metropolitan of Philadelphia, 1283–1322 (Part Two)," *Journal of Modern Hellenism* 4 (Autumn 1987), 6.75–77, 10.123–25, 12.179–80. See also eadem, "Irene-Eulogia Choumnaina Palaiologina, Abbess of the Convent of Philanthropos Soter in Constantinople," *BF* 9 (1985), 121 and note 9, 123, 129, 144–45. For Nikephoros Choumnos' blame of Theoleptos, see I. Ševčenko, "Le sens et la date du traité 'Anepigraphos' de Nicéphore Choumnos," *BACBelg* 35 (1949), 484 f.

⁷¹ F. Miklosich and J. Müller, *Acta et diplomata graeca medii aevi sacra et profana*, II (Vienna, 1862), 509 f.

and to the more permissive family visitation policy of the thirteenth-century Lips typikon and the fourteenth-century Bebaia Elpidos typikon compared with the twelfth-century Kecharitomene typikon. At the same time, however, one can cite examples of Palaiologan monasteries, such as Charsianeites, which strongly discouraged contacts between monks and their relatives. It seems apparent, then, that other factors besides date affected the relationship between monasteries and families.

A recent comparative analysis of founders' typika has argued that *ktetorika typika* can be divided into two categories, aristocratic and non-aristocratic.⁷² Aristocratic typika were written for monasteries such as Kecharitomene, Pantokrator, Lips, and Bebaia Elpis, which are characterized as having lay founders, preferential treatment of aristocratic monks or nuns, strong family ties, an emphasis on administration and property, and a preference for the cenobitic form of monasticism. "Non-aristocratic" typika are rules for such foundations as Stoudios, Evergetis, Skoteine, and Theotokos Areias, which had monastic founders, replaced blood ties with spiritual kinship, emphasized equality of the monks, enjoined strict rules on enclosure and renunciation of relatives, and permitted some monks to live as hesychasts.

This categorization of typika into aristocratic and non-aristocratic has a certain validity and can serve as a useful starting point for discussion, but may be too rigid a classification. The Kosmosoteira monastery, for example, founded by Isaac Komnenos, son of Emperor Alexios I, is clearly an aristocratic foundation, but its typikon hardly mentions Isaac's family except to provide for commemorative services for his parents.⁷³ On the other hand, a number of monasteries classified as non-aristocratic do reveal a variety of links between family and monastery. The Evergetis monastery, located in a suburb of Constantinople, was founded by a certain Paul, who reportedly abandoned family and fortune to take up the monastic life, but established his new monastery on a plot of land inherited from his family.⁷⁴ The Skoteine monastery, near Philadelphia, was founded by the charcoal burner Gregory and his father Niphon; Gregory's son Maximos succeeded him as second *ktetor*.⁷⁵ Neilos Damilas, *ktetor* of the convent at

Baionaia in Crete, criticizes the nuns for giving their kinsmen money out of their earnings from handwork; he further stipulates that only with the permission of the superior may they give fruit, presumably grown in the monastic orchards, to their relatives.⁷⁶

The danger of confining oneself to an analysis of surviving typika is that one is limited to investigating only those monasteries whose rules are known to us through an accident of preservation. Furthermore, it is important to remember that typika are theoretical rules of monasteries, and present an ideal, which needs to be supplemented with such evidence as historical narrative, saints' lives, monastic acts, and archaeological evidence, which present a more complete picture of how monasteries functioned in reality. I should like, therefore, to suggest some additional factors which may be involved in patterns of relationship between families and monasteries, while acknowledging that much work remains to be done on this subject. This is especially true with regard to donations of family property to monasteries.

One point that emerges from a survey of typika and hagiography is that nuns were much more likely than monks to maintain relationships with their families. All six surviving typika for convents stress in one way or another their ties with the family of the founder, or continuing relationships between the nuns and their kinsmen. Vitae such as those of Theodora of Thessalonike and Irene of Chrysobalanton illustrate a similar trend: Theodora lived in the same convent as her daughter; although Irene had left her home in Cappadocia for Constantinople, she maintained contacts with her relatives who lived in the capital, members of the patrician Gouber family, and with her sister, the wife of Caesar Bardas. One of the major episodes in the vita is her intervention with the emperor to save the life of a kinsman who had been falsely accused of treason.⁷⁷ Jan Rosenqvist, who has recently prepared a new edition of the vita of Irene, has remarked on the positive attitude toward family ties in this saint's life, and suggests that the writing of the vita may have been commissioned by the Gouber family on the occasion of their restoration of the convent of Chrysobalanton in the tenth century.⁷⁸

⁷²C. Galatariotou, "Byzantine Ktetorika Typika: A Comparative Study," *REB* 45 (1987), 77–138.

⁷³*Ibid.*, 106.

⁷⁴P. Gautier, "Le typikon de la Théotokos Evergétis," *REB* 40 (1982), 15.22–17.32.

⁷⁵*Skoteine*, 325–27.

⁷⁶S. Pétridès, "Le typikon de Nil Damilas pour le monastère de femmes de Baëonia en Crète (1400)," *IRAIK* 15 (1911), 100.26–31, 101.3–5.

⁷⁷*The Life of St. Irene of Chrysobalanton*, ed. Rosenqvist, chap. 21.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, xxxii–xxxviii.

One explanation of this pattern of family loyalty to be seen in nuns is that most women entered a monastery near their family home. Unlike monks, who might travel far afield to join a monastic community and frequently moved from one monastery to another, women were more likely to remain in the city of their birth and almost always stayed in the same monastery for life.⁷⁹ As the Dowager Empress Theodora Palaiologina noted in the introduction to the Lips typikon, women who “are of a gentle and weak nature . . . need strong protection, inasmuch as they are accustomed to staying at home.”⁸⁰ When women did move to another region, it was often for one of two reasons: they were compelled to relocate by enemy attack,⁸¹ or they moved to be close to a male relative who had entered a distant monastery or hermitage.⁸² It appears that most holy mountains, which were often restricted to monks, had one convent nearby to house kinswomen of these monks. Thus, the convent of Eupraxia, near Mount Galesios, but not actually on the holy mountain, was named after the mother of St. Lazaros of Galesios, and took in female relatives of Galesiot monks.⁸³ Similarly the mother and sister of St. Stephen the Younger lived

in the convent of Trichinarea on Mount St. Auxentios so that they could be near the holy man.⁸⁴

I would suggest that the location of monasteries was another factor causing differences in the relationships between monks and nuns and their families. In many of the urban monasteries—and let us remember that most convents were in cities—founded as mausolea for members of local aristocratic families, one would expect relatives to visit the monasteries on a fairly frequent basis, to attend commemorative services or to pay their respects at the tombs of their beloved departed kinsmen. Monasteries founded on islands or remote holy mountains, on the other hand, were deliberately situated in isolated locations so as to be freer of the temptations of the city and ties with family and friends. Monks who lived in such remote monasteries were more likely to renounce even the spiritual bonds linking the brethren in a koinobion and to spend part of their monastic career as hesychasts or *kelliotai* living in solitary hermitages.

Finally, we need to remind ourselves that Byzantine men and women adopted the monastic habit at various stages of life. One should differentiate between the young man or woman who decided on a monastic vocation early in life and those who entered a monastery in middle or old age. The monks and nuns who took vows in their youth were more likely to be motivated purely by piety and to renounce family ties, while those who entered monasteries in later life, having married and borne children, had a greater tendency to retain their bonds of kinship.

⁷⁹ Talbot, “Comparison” 2–4, 14–17.

⁸⁰ . . . καὶ μᾶλλον εἰ τύχοι γε ὃν γυναικῶν τῆς ἀπαλῆς καὶ ἀσθενοῦς φύσεως καὶ ἰσχυρᾶς ἐπικουρίας δεόμενον, ἅτε καὶ εἰθισμένων οἰκουρίᾳ (leg. οἰκουρίᾳ) . . . : *Lips*, chap. 3, p. 108. 5–7.

⁸¹ Examples are St. Theodora of Thessalonike and Thomais, the godmother of the historian Sphrantzes; cf. Talbot, “Comparison,” 14 note 73.

⁸² E.g., the sisters of Gregory Palamas; cf. above, note 25.

⁸³ *Vita s. Lazari*, chap. 164, 201; *ActaSS*, Nov. 3: 558B–C, 570A.

⁸⁴ *Vita s. Stephani Junioris*, PG 100, col. 1093C–D.